SPONSA REGIS MAY, 1964

THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT DESERVED SEVERE PUNISHMENT

HE HAD BEEN FORGIVEN
A HUGE DEBT
BY HIS LORD
BUT HE WOULD NOT FORGIVE
HIS FELLOW SERVANT
A TRIFLING AMOUNT

SPONSA REGIS

A SPIRITUAL REVIEW FOR SISTERS

MAY 1964 VOLUME 25 NUMBER 9

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Published monthly by monks of Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota. Rev. Ronald Roloff, O.S.B., Editor; Rev. Myron Kasprick, O.S.B., Managing Editor; Rev. Raymond Roseliep, Poetry Editor. Advisory Board: Rev. Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., Sister Ritamary Bradley, C.H.M., Sister M. Rose Emmanuella Brennan, S.N.J.M., Sister M. Emmanuel Collins, O.S.F., Mother Mary Robert Falls, O.S.U., Sister M. Jean Frances Fiffe, O.P., Sister M. Jeremy Hall, O.S.B., Sister M. Jerome Keeler, O.S.B., Sister M. Teresa Francis McDade, B.V.M., Sister Mary Virginia Micka, C.S.J., Sister M. Charles Borromeo Muckerhirn, C.S.C., Sister Mary Emil Penet, I.H.M., Sister Mary James Walsh, S.N.D., Sister Annette Walters, C.S.J., Mother Mary Florence Wolff, S.L., Sister M. Francine Zeller, O.S.F.

Address all correspondence except poetry to Sponsa Regis, Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321 (Checks payable to Sponsa Regis.) Poetry should be sent to Rev. Raymond Roseliep, Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa 52003. 1 year $2.50; 2 years $4.00; single copy 25 cents. Sterling area (except Australia): 1 year 18*s*; 2 years 29*s*; single copy 1*s* 11*d*. Australia: 1 year 23*s*; 2 years 37*s*; single copy 2*s* 3*d*. Agent for India: Asian Trading Corporation, Post Box No. 1505, Bombay-1. Indexed in the *Catholic Periodical Index*. Printed by Sentinel Publishing Company, 413 East Saint Germain Street, Saint Cloud, Minnesota. Second class postage paid at Saint Cloud, Minnesota. (Do not send mail to this address.)

Our Reasonable Service

SISTER TERESA MARGARET, O.C.D.

Advertisements for a recently published book on the spiritual life quote a Sister, Dean of a College: "At every meeting of the Sister Formation Conferences I have attended, *the big problem* of having *too much work assigned in obedience, preventing the Sisters from giving themselves to prayer and the interior life,* has been discussed and lamented..." (Italics mine).

This is surely an extraordinary statement. How is it possible that any work assigned by legitimate authority and undertaken in the spirit of faith and obedience, can *prevent* a religious from giving herself to God or finding him in that work? True, it might rule out for a certain period (or even the greater part of one's life) particular exercises of prayer; and as we are all fundamentally selfish, especially in regard to spiritual practices from which we derive pleasure or satisfaction, we feel our soul is being deprived of its rightful need of nourishment. But surely we have all learned, at the outset of our religious life, that a *sine qua non* in the following of Christ is that, like him, we find "our meat in doing the will of him who called us."

It is often said that prayer is work and work is prayer. This is true; but only if we have already and elsewhere acquired the spirit of prayer can we effect the metamorphosis, for it is never the action in itself that constitutes the prayer, but rather the supernatural orientation of the work. There are few, it seems, in these days of fuss and busy-ness about many things, who really understand, let alone cultivate, "total well-being in domestic living." It is a commonplace today for the laity to be exhorted to find God in the daily round; that the commuter on the subway, the clerk at his desk, the boilermaker at his engine, are performing a duty of worship and sacrifice no less essential than attending church on Sunday; that "putting on Christ" is not a departmentalized affair of private devotions, but must permeate social, economic, and domestic spheres no less than those formally labelled

"liturgical"; that we immolate Christ in sacrifice as we stand at the kitchen sink or factory bench or operating table, perpetually offering with the priest the "bread and wine" of joy, friendship, weariness, leisure, hunger, suffering, pleasure, success, or failure: our reasonable service. And a religious is surely expected, no less, to go to God through the "duties of her state in life."

Did we consecrate our lives to God unreservedly, or were there stipulated conditions and contingency clauses in our contract about hours and working conditions, side benefits and extra remuneration for overtime? Man's first duty is not prayer, but work. It is not our highest duty, but it is our first. If we work by the will of God and under obedience, that is our first prayer because it is God's will that we should do so. "Formal prayer is not everything, not even the greater part of one's day. God himself asked for but one day out of seven. This does not mean we forget him the other six. It merely recognizes that man's life, as his day, is taken up mainly with work, but insists that all these concerns culminate in the only act that can give them unity: worship."[1] But this essential worship does not have to be offered only on one's knees; it rises through the liturgy or broom and trowel, typewriter and blackboard. Nobody should be able truthfully to claim that work hinders her interior life, for that is to admit a faulty attitude to work and an attenuated concept of the life of grace and prayer.

The first step towards transforming one's work into prayer is to acquire an attitude of calm. When we work with haste and agitation, a background of tension is created which effectively hinders self-control and personal harmony, both in ourselves and those who have to work with us, making it virtually impossible to attend to God. When one has a crowded itinerary or a heavy assignment, to work at a fever-pitch of nervous energy is semi-instinctive. But even on the material plane, when we are working at top pressure we are not necessarily giving our utmost; while on the supernatural count it is often "to hammer vigorously, and to accomplish little more than nothing, at times nothing at all; at times, indeed, it may even be to do harm."[2]

[1] "Consent and Concern for the Kingdom" by David Burrell, C.S.C. *Sponsa Regis*, Vol. 34, No. 6, February, 1963. p. 179.

[2] St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza 28, Red. 2 (Peers ed.).

No religious can live for herself alone. By her consecration she belongs to the Church. Like every other human being, she has duties to God, to the Church, to her country, and to her neighbours; and if she works conscientiously at whatever task obedience assigns her, then she is fulfilling these obligations in the most perfect way. The work allotted may be very different from what she would naturally choose: it may seem incompatible with her tastes or abilities, tedious, too heavy for her capacities, or to all appearances futile and time-wasting. But in God's eyes it is not so. "Stand firm," Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "immovable in your resolve, doing your full share continually in the task the Lord has given you, since you know that your labor in the Lord's service cannot be spent in vain" (I, 15:58). The task of the present moment is God's will for each of us; and no duty done under obedience can conceivably hinder, let alone *prevent* one from giving herself fully, completely, generously and meritoriously to prayer and the interior life, although it may radically alter the formula used to do so. A Sister cannot be deluded. As long as she lives according to her Rule and in obedience to the duties imposed by lawful authority, she can truly say: "I do *always* the things that please the Father" (John 8:29). Obedience stamps on her every movement conformity to the divine will.

Where, then, is the "problem"? For the one who obeys, there is none. There is, certainly, a problem — and a very serious one — for the superior who imposes the too-heavy assignment, for it should not be that a religious has insufficient time for her routine exercises of prayer and spiritual reading or free recreational periods. No human being should be asked to work like a mechanical robot that can be set up and allowed to produce non-stop, until it breaks down and is replaced by another; and the superior who overloads her charge, unless under grave necessity or in a temporary emergency, is abusing her authority. But even so, the responsibility is hers, and the one who obeys can be in no doubt about her position or her response.

A good superior, according to Saint Benedict, must possess so many and such diverse qualities that no single human being could possibly boast them all. Superiors do not always excel in the

virtues deemed essential to their office; indeed they may lack some quite indispensable ones. But however misguided or imprudent a superior may prove, for the subordinate obedience in spirit as well as in outward conformity enables her to recognize the will of God, and to realize that this is found more certainly in the will of another than in one's own. "When a monk obeys in all things for the love of God and in union with Jesus Christ, he reaches the summit of perfection.... *There are no longer any obstacles* opposed to the divine action for a soul unreservedly given up to obedience."[3] Obedience removes obstacles, it does not construct them.

The "problem" expressed by the Sisters quoted above is often bound up with the subconscious envy with which, at some time in her busy, harrassed life, the Sister dedicated to the active apostolate regards the seemingly leisurely tempo of life in the cloister. This subjective temptation was dealt with thoroughly in an excellent article by Father Ronald Roloff, O.S.B., published in *Sponsa Regis* in December, 1962,[4] and needs no further elucidation. I would, however, like to offer a few observations from the other side of the wall where, it seems, the grass appears so lush to those who must tread the maze of steel and concrete in pursuing the corporal works of mercy.

The enclosed nun's day appears, on the surface, an affair of tranquil rhythm that never suffers the least jolt. Hours are prescribed for prayer, divine office and spiritual reading, occupying by far the greater portion of her horarium. Manual labour is heavy, but it is the kind of elemental work that keeps one close to the soil and the creator of its fruits. If the task on hand is not completed when the bell signals prayer or divine office, the work is laid aside unfinished as having the lower priority. She has no scruples to tease her as to whether she should sacrifice sleep or recreation to the interests of an incomplete or urgent schedule; if she does so she will be accusing herself of the fault at the next conventual Chapter! If only, thinks the overburdened teaching Sister, I could live like that: sure of two hours of private prayer a day, with time to sort out my own thoughts and tidy the cupboards

[3] Abbot Marmion, O.S.B., *Christ the Ideal of the Monk*, Ch. XII (iv) p. 261. Italics mine.

[4] "The Formation of the Sister for her Apostolic Mission," pp. 106-117.

of my interior life! It is a natural and understandable reaction amid the speed, noise, and hyper-activity of competitive, high-pressure, modern living.

What is very seldom realized is the real sacrifice that can be demanded in removing oneself completely from the active apostolate. When there is so much crying out to be done and so few to undertake the enormous burden of preaching, catechizing, nursing, educating, and relieving every kind of physical and spiritual misery of our human need — schools, parishes and hospitals to be staffed, missions calling for help and supplies, the sufferings of the needy, the undernourished, and the neglected to be alleviated — when one considers all this, it sometimes requires a vigorous effort to accept on faith that, all other things being equal, the life of prayer is of more value to the Church and to the apostolate, and that, as Saint John of the Cross says: "One instant of pure love is more precious in the sight of God, and of greater profit to the Church, even though the soul appear to be doing nothing, than are all these works together." Never to see any result for one's labours, to have in this life no satisfaction from the contemplation of a job completed and well done, can be no small renunciation. None of us have any way of knowing whether in the whole of our lives we achieve "one instant" of this pure and perfect love that is so fruitful, in whatever sphere of life we are; we can all hope, of course, to qualify for marks for trying!

A novice came to me once in great distress. She could not continue in the life or make her profession because she felt she was a supernumerary. There was so much to be done, and she was cultivating her own precious soul as though it were the only one in the world. People were dying without the sacraments, and her most urgent concern was examining her own conscience. Everywhere was need, ignorance, poverty — while she, having "left all things to follow Christ," wanted for nothing! She had a degree of material security unknown by many in the world, and should any legitimate need arise, she had no worry as to whether she could afford it; she merely made known her requirement and it was forthwith supplied. The greater proportion of humanity went hungry, while she was provided with more food than she could

eat. How could one dedicated to God say that she had given all? What answer could she make when asked whether she had ministered to Christ in his members who were "hungry or thirsty, or strangers, or naked, or sick, or in prison"?

To the question, What would she do were she to return to the world? her answer was unhesitating. She would go to the slums in one of the big industrial cities and share the lot of its underprivileged inhabitants, trying to relieve their needs and to bring Christ into their lives.

Her good will and generosity were unquestionable. It took only a few minutes to adjust her sights and show her that there is no particular merit in indigence of itself. Not only would she, by electing her own free-lance mission, put herself beyond the radius of the sanctifying element of obedience, but she would narrow her ambit to one street, one tenement, one family, even perhaps one person. She could share their misery, perhaps alleviate it, no doubt project Christ's image to them in so far as they were capable of receiving it. But only to this street, that mission — whereas as a member of a monastic order she could serve wherever there was need, beyond the limits of time or place. As Saint Thérèse of Lisieux said: "It is not *a* mission you are to evangelize, but *all* missions!"

Saint Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart entered the Carmel in Florence when she was eighteen, and died five and a half years later. Her brief religious career was even less eventful than that of Saint Thérèse, her spiritual life quite "ordinary" and devoid of any miraculous graces or mystical phenomena. She was so overworked as infirmarian with a long list of old nuns to care for — infirm, demanding (and one insane and violent) — that she rarely had time for prayer. On many occasions she was absent from choir for Mass and Communion, but her only comment was, "If I am working here through obedience, my duty is to be in the infirmary and not in the choir. Serving the sick and the perfect accomplishment of a task imposed by obedience is the best preparation for Communion, because God is not limited as to time or place."

Questioned by her confessor whether her heavy duties did not prevent interior recollection, she replied simply: "If we die to self

and live in God, it does not seem possible to me that his company and his love can hinder us in performing our active works, however distracting they may be. If I always act only through obedience, I do not believe that God *could* destroy his own work, or that exterior occupations should present any obstacle to union with him."

Such an habitual orientation, of course, presupposes that one has already learned to live in the presence of God, and the value of this practice in every sphere of life cannot be stressed too much.

In the last years of his life Abbot Marmion complained repeatedly: "I am *crushed* with work and worry..." He had the administration of a large abbey with a community of 130, schools, farm and convents to supervise; he was giving retreats several times a year in England, Ireland, Belgium, and France; whenever the Bishop was away he looked on the Abbot as his auxiliary; if Cardinal Mercier visited Rome or Lourdes or went on a retreat, he must have Dom Marmion with him; he was personally directing about twenty souls (including the Cardinal), writing books, and facing an exhausting daily correspondence, as well as persevering in full choir attendance and night offices. There are few, however full their schedule, who could complain of greater pressure of work than Abbot Marmion, whom it certainly did not "prevent from giving himself to prayer." Rather his interior life deepened and grew stronger as he himself became ever more childlike in spirit, abandoned and supple in the hands of God, whose will he constantly sought and embraced in the multifarious and imperative burdens that weighed him down. The cloister guarantees neither exemption from heavy assignments nor leisure for the cultivation and embellishment of one's own interior life according to any preconceived notions of how this is to be done. It preaches the attitude of acceptance: "Teach me to do thy will"; and the necessary response to its manifestations: *Adsum.*

The whole concept of obedience is so fundamental to religious life that without it the entire structure would collapse. But religious obedience, while it can be a heavy burden at times, is not necessarily so, and should be regarded less as an abdication of liberty or autonomy than as a positive good to be sought and embraced,

a sharing of the obedience of Christ. Rather than imposing restrictions which sanctify, it frees us from fetters which do not. Nor is it meant to crush us under its yoke, or provide a daily irritant, but to make easier the path. It would be ludicrous to expect that in order to render one's obedience supernatural it must be made difficult and vexing. The order that is pleasing to obey, the commission that harmonizes with our tastes and abilities, do not necessarily remain on the level of merely natural obedience, unless we make it so by our lack of interior spirit; and this derogation can be effected in a galling order no less.

Human nature has an uncanny knack of seeking the will of God anywhere but where it is to be found — in the duty of the present moment. We are so certain that we know where to gather the bread and wine for our sacrifice, that we fail to notice the ear of wheat offered for our grinding, ignore the commonplace vine about our porch heavy with fruit ripe for crushing. We sigh after some opportunity for great and heroic sacrifice; but it is self more often than God that we seek and find. It is only when we have been transformed into hosts that we are fit for sacrifice, that we can call ourselves Christian at all, and claim that we have "finished the work you sent me to do," which is to fulfill the infinite, all-perfect, all-holy will of God.

Evelyn Underhill wrote:

"I come in the little things,
Saith the Lord:
Not borne on morning wings
Of majesty, but I have set My Feet
Amidst the delicate and bladed wheat
That springs triumphant in the furrowed sod."

Coming to Know God

BERTRAND A. PATTISON, OBL. S.B.

In one of his books, Aldous Huxley makes an observation which seems rather startling when one considers that he is an agnostic, for it is something which many Catholics (including religious men and women) have failed to realize. He says, "By the end of the seventeenth century, mysticism has lost its old significance in Christianity and is more than half dead."

"Well, what of it?" it may be asked. "Why shouldn't it die? What use is it when it is alive?"

Huxley goes on to answer his own questions:

"The answer to these questions is that where there is no vision, the people perish; and that, if those who are the salt of the earth lose their savor, there is nothing to keep that earth disinfected, nothing to prevent it from falling into complete decay. The mystics are channels through which a little knowledge of reality filters down into our human universe of ignorance and illusion. A totally unmystical world would be a world totally blind and insane. From the beginning of the 18th century onwards, the sources of mystical knowledge have been steadily diminishing in number all over the planet. We are dangerously far advanced into the darkness."

Those are rather surprising and reasonably true observations for an agnostic!

In another part of this same work the author points out, quite rightly, that there has never been any kind of true reformation, either of Christian institutions or of individuals, without contemplation.

There are profoundly good souls who have been brought up in a religious tradition which makes them shy away from the words "contemplation" and "mysticism" as if they were some form of spiritual plague, as if they were a bait for spiritual pride. To such a pass has the rich inheritance of Catholic contemplation and mysticism come, that many think of it as the reserve of some chosen

souls; this was not so before the blight of Jansenism fell upon the Church.

Let us look at this matter a little more closely, because it is something that may be fundamental to the saving of our souls; it is certainly something fundamental to the degree of perfection to which we are committed and to that degree of reward which we hope to receive as a result of having left all things to follow Christ.

We know this for certain, that we were made to know, love, and serve God and to live with him for all eternity. This is the end and purpose of our life.

If we think of our vocation in terms of *life*, we will realize that this calls for two particular factors of great importance: *assimilation* and *growth*. These are the two fundamental elements of life.

Our religious community provides whatever is necessary for the life of the body. We ourselves are responsible for that other life which is within the soul. Here, too, we have to assimilate and grow, otherwise there will be no true life within the soul.

I suggest that this assimilation and growth is the work of contemplation. It is essentially a mystical work, and it is a work that has to be done by all, not just by chosen souls.

Our objective is a knowledge and love of God. The two highest faculties of the soul, the intellect and the will, have to assimilate and hence unite themselves to the knowledge and love of God. For this work — and it is indeed an arduous but loving task — there is only one essential way, and that is the way of prayer, of contemplation, the mystical way.

KNOWLEDGE: To know God. There are, of course, a thousand and one avenues to the knowledge of God. Those who are living within a religious environment are surrounded by objects which remind them of the things of God. Our senses are constantly being impressed with the sense of God's presence in our midst: by the signs of the cross that we make, by the acts of courtesy we show him with our bows and genuflections, the striking of our breasts, even the disposition of our hands and eyes. There is not a day that passes in which we do not hear the words of his revelation; there is the constant liturgy of the Mass and Office with which our ears ring with his praises, his love and compassion. All our senses are, in this manner, tingling with the knowledge of

God. But all of this, essential as it is, is but a sensible knowledge of the things of God. It is essential, because we are made that way, we acquire all our knowledge in that manner. But this is also true: that we have to assimilate this knowledge into the higher and conservative part of our being; we have to translate and transform this sensible awareness of God into something spiritual. That is only done by contemplation, by the function of prayer.

Let us, for a moment, consider a parallel.

A man or woman who is working in a city experiences, during the course of a day, a thousand and one sense impressions of people, things, noises. Only one out of a thousand of those busy citizens could sit down at the end of the day and give a moderately accurate account of what they had seen and heard during the course of their work-a-day life. There would be certain things that would stand out, probably, because they were new or extraordinary in character; but for the most part men and women are quite unconscious of the sense knowledge of people and things around them; they never store up those impressions. But there are certain persons who are trained observers; they could sit down and give a very accurate account (a very valuable account, say to the police) of everything they had seen, felt, and heard during the day. They are exceptional, and trained to do this; and they do it because they are self-conscious. They absorb into their consciousness (that is, into their intellect) the sense impressions that have been made upon them. Other people's interior life is almost untouched by what goes on around them.

It is surprising how we too can become more or less immune to our surroundings, how the thousand and one reminders of God have so little effect upon us. We may say that it is because they have become a habit, because they have become part of us. But that is the whole point, have they? I suggest that it is only the contemplative soul who is the trained observer of these daily reminders of God's presence in our midst. Contemplative knowledge of God does not start at the topmost peak of knowledge; it starts in the lowly valley of sense knowledge; it starts with the signs and symbols of religion; it starts with the hearing of God's life on earth, hearing him through the senses, not in the interior silence of the soul.

If this is true, the first step in the art of contemplation is in becoming self-conscious of the thousand and one ways of being aware of God impressing himself upon us through our ears, through our eyes, the actions and motions of the liturgy.

This active awareness that God is making himself known to us through a sign of the cross, through a dipping of the fingers in the holy water stoup, is all part and parcel of contemplation, though it may seem remote from the act of contemplation itself. But we only make that act the more difficult by ignoring, by forgetting, by failing to acquire this habit of self-consciousness of the sense-avenues by which God comes to our soul.

There must, of course, be times when we directly and purposely transform this sense knowledge into an act of the mind—when we recollect ourselves, which is another way of saying, when we collect all these tidbits of knowledge and let them become something intelligent and, therefore, something loveable; when they become, in the fullest meaning, a means of lifting up our minds and hearts to God in an act of prayer.

However much we may have to discipline our senses, that they may become the instruments of our will, we must remember that we are exercising this form of mortification in order that these same senses may be more attuned to the awareness of God, hidden within the symbols of the religious life that surrounds us. It is in this manner that our senses play a fundamental part in our contemplative life; and as long as we are dependent upon our senses for our knowledge, we may as well make them our helpmates in coming to know God.

Between our senses and the spirit world of our soul, there lies that lively and disturbing element of the imagination. It is a kind of antechamber to the soul. This antechamber of the imagination is peopled by countless occupants, milling around, or sitting down, waiting to get in to an engagment with Mr. Intellect or Mrs. Will. And the trouble with these little people in the antechamber is that many of them are just common gate-crashers. No sooner do we open the door of our mind, by way of inviting God into it, than a hundred of these uninvited guests come crowding into the throne-room, where we had hoped to have God alone for our guest.

To change the metaphor for a moment, the imagination is an important link in the assembly-line of our knowledge of God, in the belt-line of our contemplative life, as an instrument of prayer.

The first, as we have seen, is the link of our external senses with God. But whatever knowledge comes through the senses has to make entry through, or an impression upon, the imagination. It is here, in this queer world of half-sensible and half-spirit life, that the knowledge of the senses is transformed, so that the intellect can become aware of it, so that the will can adhere to it. Of course, there are a thousand things that are thus transformed without our being aware of this process. They pass on to the subconscious. There they lie in a kind of limbo and trouble us in our dreams.

The important thing is that if we have tried to cultivate an awareness of God in our sense knowledge, as mentioned previously, we are by that very fact sorting out the kind of people who will live in our imagination. If the thought of God has tinged our sense knowledge of things, no matter how remote they may be from his divine perfection they will, when they come into our imagination, take far less trouble to transform into something spiritual. If these sense impressions are already God-directed, they will be all the more alive in our imagination with the mark of God upon them.

In this way the imagination becomes far less a kind of sieve through which our sensible knowledge of God has to pass; rather, it becomes a kind of mirror reflecting for the intellect those things by which we can come to know God.

But the imagination is not merely a passive faculty, receiving impressions from without. In its own right, and by its own nature, it is an active faculty in growing in the knowledge of God.

It is obviously a much higher faculty than the senses; it is much nearer to the soul and therefore much nearer to the seat of all our contemplation. Perhaps, for many of us, it is far too active, but don't let that bother us for the moment. The important thing is to realize that it is a tremendous factor in the art of contemplation, in the growth of the knowledge of God, in the mystical life.

The imagination—with which I am linking our sense memory—is the film on which all our knowledge of God has been impressed, up to the time when we may have had some infused knowledge.

Whatever we have heard about God, whatever we have read about God with our eyes, whatever reactions we have felt about God during the drama of the Mass, or the recitation of the rosary, or the stations of the cross, have left their impression upon the imagination. What a tremendous store-house of the knowledge of God this should be for each of us!

In this way Christ has been living in us without our fully realizing it.

Now it is the function of contemplation to put order into this storehouse of knowledge. Contemplation is most certainly a rational affair; it must have order and sequence. It is not something that just happens to us.

The impulse or the desire to contemplate should compel us, in the first place, to put order and direction into our knowledge coming through the senses, making this knowledge conscious of God's presence in all things. Secondly, this desire to contemplate God, to grow in a knowledge of him, should put order and direction into our imagination.

If we sort out in our imagination those things which pertain to the life of God as he was on earth, as he dwells in the souls of men; if, by our own deliberate act, we people our minds with those things which lead us most directly to know him, it is certain that other imaginative forms and images will have to take a back seat.

If we ask ourselves, how did the Son of God reveal himself to man? How did he come to make himself more and more known to man? We have to answer, In two ways. One, by taking a body like our own, by which he shared in our own sense life and through which men came to see, hear, and feel his healing touch. Secondly, he played upon men's imagination; he made word pictures for them, not because they were dull men, but simply because they were just the way he had made them. In order that they might know more about God's mercy, he painted for them the very imaginative stories of the prodigal son and the Good Shepherd. These pictures were very real to those who heard him, and they were full of all kinds of sense objects: money that the son took away; dinners and women on which he spent it; scenes of starvation; then the last scenes of the home-coming. There is a tremendous work of the imagination put into this story. But it is orderly, it is directed

towards the Father's mercy, and it deeply moves the will towards God after we have contemplated the essence of the story.

When Jesus said of Mary, "She has chosen the better part," we know that he was speaking about the necessity of contemplation. But what was Mary doing? Was she rapt in ecstasy, was she receiving from Christ an infused form of knowledge concerning his divinity? Certainly not; she was sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to him telling stories. Mary came to Jesus through the attraction of the senses; she came to know him more through the use of her imagination. All this time she was contemplating without realizing it. There would come a time when she no longer needed these instruments; but at the time she made the choice of the contemplative life of Christ, that higher knowledge within the inner life of the soul was quite incomprehensible to her. Her first steps towards sanctity were her sensible tears; the second steps were taken when she sat and listened to Christ's stories about the kingdom of God.

ST. ROSE OF CARLO DOLCI

(After the painting in the Pitti Palace)

This is a special love, no stigmata, though
clearly seen in a long spanish face stippled
by tears. Roses draw water from cracked jars, forming crowns of grief under the arbors laden

with wine grapes. Trampling feet will make channels of
red vintage run. This is a very harvest:
one saint whose eyes marvel at wheat almost burned
by somewhat more than heat of Andean sun.

DAVID A. LOCHER

Jacob's Combat with the Angel

JEAN-MARIE TÉZÉ, S.J.

Nothing in Scripture should remain meaningless after it has become the object of Christian meditation. Nevertheless, certain passages bewilder us, for we do not always grasp the religious intention which inspires them. Such is the case with Jacob's struggle with the angel, related in the thirty-second chapter of the book of Genesis. Jacob has just spent twenty years with his father-in-law, Laban, and on God's order, he is returning to Canaan. He is preparing to ford the stream which now separates him from the Promised Land. Suddenly, in the night, an unknown adversary appears and blocks the way. A struggle follows; it is prolonged until the break of day. Jacob emerges wounded in the hip; the adversary refuses to reveal his name but bestows a blessing before departing.

This narrative is indeed puzzling to the reader who comes upon it for the first time. Who is this adversary who resembles God more than man, and whom tradition calls an angel? What is the meaning of the struggle in which Jacob engages?

Our account is filled with movement. Its development attracts —and its issue differs sharply from the initial setting. The man who penetrates the soil of divine blessings at dawn is no longer he who the preceding dusk feared to encounter his brother Esau. It is Israel, patriarch of the chosen people, victor in spiritual combat, who is now our model. A single night of trial has transformed a poor creature of flesh into a confidant of God, an intimate who shares His secrets and who has become mighty with His omnipotence. "What does it mean to struggle with God," asks Saint Ambrose, "unless it is to accept the combat of virtue—unless it is to measure ourselves against what surpasses us and to become an imitator of God who overcomes all others?"[1]

MAN'S FEAR

What are Jacob's dispositions on the eve of his struggle against the angel? They are already those of a fighter, but of a fighter

[1] P. L., *Fathers of the Church*, 14, 626.

of men. Esau will not let his brother return to the Promised Land. This Jacob knows. He knows the reasons as well. If he had once fled, hadn't it been because of the anger which his brother nourished against him (Gen. 27:43) and which he well deserved? Consequently he expects a dangerous encounter. "Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother.... The messengers returned saying: 'We have come to your brother. Behold, he himself now comes out with speed to meet you. He has four hundred men with him.' Then Jacob was greatly afraid" (32:4,8).

Jacob's anguish was all the more biting because it was a religious anxiety — not that of an adventurer who tries his luck. Jacob is the object of God's design, and he is returning into his homeland as God had promised (28:15). Furthermore, it is by direct order of Yahweh that Jacob decides to return: "Now, standing, depart from this land and return to that of your fathers" (31:3). Besides, Yahweh assists him in the difficulties which Jacob must overcome, permitting his flight from Laban (31:42), sending angels to comfort him (32:3). The tide of the Jordan which he must now cross represents the last barrier of the pilgrimage. Esau lies in wait on the other side under the guise of an enemy of God. The moment is crucial, not only because Jacob is risking his life, but because the divine promises are at stake. Only those who have chosen to obey God can comprehend the real extent of the combat which threatens and of the spiritual anguish which it engenders.

In his anxiety, Jacob fears the worst. Yet he does not let his thoughts stray. The text which Scripture offers us on this point brings out both the ruse and the prayer of the patriarch, two attitudes of Christian realism which the Gospels will endorse. Jacob takes the necessary precautions. He divides his people and his goods to avoid losing all of them; he sends one company as presents to Esau (32:8-9, 14-21). We also see him addressing God, whom he reminds of the obligations of fidelity. He recalls to Him the holy mission with which he is charged and of his unworthiness: "God of my father Abraham, Yahweh who commanded me: 'Return to thy land and to the place of thy birth, and I will do well for thee.' I am unworthy of all the favors and of all the good things which thou has wrought for thy servant.... Deliver me from the

hand of my brother Esau, for I fear him, lest he come to strike us down, the mother with her children..." (32:10,13).

Jacob's ambivalent attitude is indeed characteristic. Isn't it that of every Christian in hours of peril? The obstacle which we perceive monopolizes our entire energy. We plan, we organize, and the prayer which we utter is one of supplication. It also is turned toward the feared event. How could our prayer be otherwise? Disinterested praise is not opportune; time is short. We have need of a powerful and merciful God; it is to such a God that we appeal. Jacob's attention is focused upon his human adversary, Esau. His own will remains that of a man, Jacob—of Jacob the stubborn, of Jacob the clever.

CONFRONTING GOD

Night has come, and with it not Esau but "someone." The encounter is nocturnal, sudden, disconcerting—as God's intervention in the lives of men so often is. Jacob's terror has redoubled; he can imagine the terror of Jesus in Gethsemani ahead in time, of Paul on the road to Damascus. Now the adversary is near and the engagement threatening. Flight or hesitation has become impossible. Terror gives birth to resolution: "I have so often had the experience," writes Saint Teresa, "and now realize that each time we make up our mind from the beginning to act for God alone, He wishes us to feel fear before putting our hand to the task, in order to increase our merit. The greater the fear, the greater its recompense when surmounted. We then experience great joy."[2]

When the angel lays hold of Jacob, the patriarch is alone. "That same night he arose, took his two wives, his two servants, his eleven sons and passed over the ford of Jabac. He led them forth and made them pass through the torrent; he had everything which he possessed pass over" (32:23-24). Thus he separated himself from his riches, which he had sent before him with his people. He was prepared for the eventuality of seeing them destroyed, at least in part, by Esau. Now he must rid himself of his affections: everyone whom he loves is on the other side of the stream, and he returns to the far bank. He is alone in a strange land. It is in

[2] *Vie écrite par elle-même*, trad. du R. P. Grégoire de Saint Joseph, dans *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. du Seuil, t. I, 1949, p. 35.

those places where we are conscious of the absence of others that God comes to us. When we are dealing with God, can anyone take our place, can anyone assume our responsibility? "We cannot be religious through power of attorney," a Protestant, Dean Inge, has said.[3] Since we are invited to execute an extremely personal act, an encounter with God, He snatches us in radical fashion from others — and even from ourselves. Such an act resembles death. When the writer Bernanos was dying, he asked his friends to withdraw and was heard to murmur: "Now, the two of us!"

It is night, and Jacob is alone. He fights hand to hand. The Fathers of the Church did not reject the interpretation of Jacob's struggling with God. They did not believe that the passage referred to the opposition by which a sinner resists his Creator. Rather, they understood it to be the confrontation of one who is faithful with Him whom he serves. The violence which Jacob undergoes, and that which he exerts as well, is a holy violence—more severe than any other and truly mystical: "mystery, the sacred reality of the struggle," Saint Augustine and Saint Hilary have written.[4]

How are we to understand this passage? All too frequently nothing more than the dialogue of God's interview with man has been retained. The Lord converses with Adam in the garden; He speaks with Noah, Abraham, and Moses. The spiritual life appears constituted of peaceful conversations between the soul and God. In our passage, we have the dialogue between Jacob and the Angel. But the combat which Jacob must first undergo reminds us of the conditions which render discourse possible. Man is not naturally prepared for intercourse with God. He isn't even prepared for dialogue with his equals. Modern philosophy provides ample proof of it. We are not spontaneously inclined to get along with others. On the contrary, the inclination to fight solicits our energy with greater force! In all encounters man has two ways out: dialogue or violence. The former excludes the latter, or rather, dominates it.

The principal interest of the episode of Jacob's encounter with the Angel consists precisely in its showing us how spiritual dialogue is born of violence laboriously mastered. Our heart has no secrets

[3] Cited by L. Bouyer in *Du Protestantisme à l'Eglise*, éd. du Cerf, 1959, p. 104.

[4] *Fathers of the Church*, 38, 681 and 9, 755.

from God. He knows that we are strangers to his thought and basically carnal, even though we make profession of serving him. Far from refusing to teach us, he sets about the task and provokes an encounter. The Angel of Genesis is not bewildered by the struggle which Jacob has undertaken against him. Rather, he seems to be looking for it — and even to stimulate it with a kind of divine malice. It is good for Jacob to wrestle, to spring about, to spend the too human energies which he still possesses. For when he braves the torrent at break of day, he leaves the old man and his desires on the pagan shore. He has learned to measure himself with God, to measure himself upon God.

We must pursue our explanation. Jacob's violence could be taken to refer to the heated words of negotiation, of debate. No, in reality it is a question of the physical violence of struggle. The muscles, the body have their part in it, as Eugène Delacroix has depicted so clearly in his fresco at Saint-Sulpice. Hand to hand fighting knows no intermediary. It is an engagement in which each contestant feels the force of his opponent in himself. Jacob undergoes the experience of God in his own flesh; he molds himself upon God, he adheres to him, he becomes as it were his imprint, his "other side."

The episode provides a description of mystical experience. The creature is intimately transformed by the action which the Creator operates in him. Man is initiated into divine ways. His combat is a passion, an agony in which he experiences God and learns to know him as he could not have known him before. When speaking of our text, Claudel has written with insight: "Ah, it is only in combat that we come to know our enemy; he can no longer hide anything from us. I contrived that none of his resources might remain unknown to me." Jacob also "contrived." He succeeded in remaining active and personal under the angel's violent attack. All of his resources were directed toward the task of an intelligent but stubborn resistance to the adversary.

It would seem that Jacob came very near surpassing his opponent. "Seeing that he was not overcoming him, the angel struck him at the hip-joint and Jacob's hip was dislocated as he wrestled with him" (32:25). Jacob's wound is a perfect symbol of the spiritual combat which has reached the mystical phase. No one of

us will enter the Promised Land without having been bruised, and already our fidelity to God has begun to affect us — in our all too human forces. We limp, we have lost our carnal aplomb, our uncertain gait rests on the support of grace.

What a reversal in Jacob's situation! A few hours earlier he was preparing for his encounter with Esau, and if he prayed, it was to have the Lord on his side. Wounded, he offers himself to God's designs and he sends forth an entirely different kind of prayer, one without words. His will is transformed from within. "Simple devotion grows and becomes the principal element in his prayers. What the soul must recognize is that God hears what it asks. Yet, according to the eternal meaning of truth, it is just the opposite. In the true meaning of prayer, it is not God who hears what one asks, but he who prays continues to pray until he himself becomes the hearer, until he understands what God wishes. One kind of devotion has need of many words. That is why such prayer amounts to no more than demands; true prayer only listens."[5]

THE VIOLENCE OF LOVE

The strange match is mysterious to the very end. No better proof of it can be found than its unexpected outcome. Once again the situations are reversed, for it is the stronger who asks for mercy and the wounded combatant imposes the conditions. "The angel said to him: 'Let me go, for it is break of day.' He answered: 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me' " (32:26-27).

God wanted Jacob to request His benediction. The latter had toiled throughout the entire night. Wounded and fatigued, he had no other desire than to enter into the friendship of his adversary. This desire can find no resistance. Jacob, then, is the victor and God withdraws. Thus he had wished it: "Volens, victus est," wrote Saint Augustine.[6] The angel declares at once: "Thy name shall not be called Jacob, but Israel, for thou hast been strong against God, and how much more shalt thou prevail against men" (32:28). Thus Jacob must be wounded in order that Israel may be blessed, and thus it will be on another dawn — that of Easter. Jesus led to death will arise as Savior of the world. Through humiliation He receives "the Name that is above all names" (Philip. 2:9).

[5] Sören Kierkegaard, *Journal (extraits)*, Gallimard, t. I, 1950, pp. 255-256.
[6] *Fathers of the Church*, 38, 681.

What intimacy is now manifested between the two combatants. The angel asks Jacob his name; Jacob reveals it and is accorded another. Jacob in his turn asks the angel his name. The angel evades the question but bestows his benediction. The struggle ends in this exchange. The two share their secret; they seal an alliance.

The most profound meaning of our hand-to-hand combat is seen in its outcome. It was an embrace, an amorous struggle of two beings deeply taken with each other. So great is the intimacy to which it gives birth that words fail. "Flesh against flesh, cause against cause. Ah! it was not by words that we revealed ourselves to each other — when we spoke the name in our mouth." (We use again the words of Claudel.) When the night of the Old Testament will cede before the dawn, God in person will take human nature in his arms; he will become incarnate: holy violence of love!

Should we end our meditations here? By so doing we would neglect the unusual new beginning which the end of the episode supplies. Esau, supplanted by the Angel during the night, reappears the following morning. This fact is of great consequence.

The struggle is scarcely over when "Jacob, lifting up his eyes, saw Esau coming, and with him four hundred men" (33:1). As if nothing unusual had happened, he prepares for the meeting; he divides the children of Lia and of Rachel and of the two handmaids. Jacob firmly believes in the importance of the event which has just been concluded. How great is his surprise when he sees his worst enemy, yesterday hungry with vengeance, "run to meet his brother and embrace him, and clasping him fast about the neck, and kissing him, wept" (33:3).

The return to the initial situation points to a striking reversal. Just as the nocturnal encounter had transformed Jacob, we are to note that the world about him has also changed. In surprising, incomprehensible fashion, Esau, the sworn enemy, has become the most tender of brothers! Yet what is more resilient than hate? By God's design the obstacle so feared by Jacob has vanished as if by enchantment. All of this is to say that it is impossible to really find God — within the proximity which spiritual combat pervades— without everything changing: ourselves, indeed, but the world around us and our relations with it as well. The mystical life does not

unfold in a universe apart, but in the world of men. Supernatural, it penetrates nature itself; a divine event, it leaves its mark on history.

Jacob's wrestling with the angel has not surrendered all its meaning. In our design of serving God and the Church, we often encounter obstacles: sickness, difficult temperaments, true adversaries. Quite naturally, we mobilize all our resources against them in order not to be overcome, not to go down beneath their reality and their urgency. Yet the true combat is not to be fought on such a level, but on a much higher plain — in the very center of ourselves. As Jacob did, we must carry our struggle to God, "against" God, with God. Obstacles have the mission of bringing us to bay in a conflict of love. If, like Jacob, we give ourselves over to the combat, we shall be surprised to see the things which troubled us suddenly disappear.

How many saints have had a similar experience. Wasn't Saint Paul obsessed by that "thorn in the flesh" which hindered his apostolic work? Three times he beseeched God to be delivered of it. But God, by mysterious encounter, transformed him to the point that this infirmity no longer bothered him and was no longer an obstacle for him, but, on the contrary, became a trump, a resource. "It is in my infirmities that I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).

"Thou hast been strong against God; how much more shalt thou prevail against men."

THE AUTHORS

Sister Teresa Margaret, O.C.D., writes from the Carmelite monastery near Cardigan, Wales. She has contributed to *Doctrine and Life, Spiritual Life, The Furrow, The Tablet,* and other reviews. — *Father Bertrand Anthony Pattison* is an Oblate of Saint Benedict of Belmont Abbey, Belmont, North Carolina. He is the author of *Assignment to Rome* and *The Spirit Enshrined.* — Librarian at Loras College, Dubuque, *David A. Locher* is preparing a first collection of his poems for publication, *Cry, Drake, at Morning.* — "Jacob's Combat with the Angel" was translated by Raymond Sullivant, S.J., from *Christus,* No. 33 (January, 1962). — *Father Hilary Smith, O.C.D.*, is currently stationed at the Shrine of the Little Flower in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Professional Enthusiasm vs. Religious Detachment

HILARY SMITH, O.C.D.

Religious superiors and writers who treat of the religious life are coming to realize more and more the value of individual initiative in religious life. As the work engaged in by religious grows more complex and requires more specialization, superiors are becoming increasingly conscious of their inability to make decisions in every department of convent life.

The superior cannot be expected to know that the Modern Language Association is having a meeting which some of the Sisters should attend, or that a local hospital is offering a special seminar for her nurses. She cannot tell when the biology lab needs a new microscope or when new language tapes are available that would better suit the school's needs. She has to depend on the initiative and professional competency of the members of the community. And of course the Sisters have a corresponding obligation to inform the superior of the needs of their departments.

But if our age has seen Sisters becoming more aware of their professional responsibilities within the community, it has also seen them increasingly concerned with the higher forms of the contemplative life. Sisters are increasingly dissatisfied with limiting their religious lives to a few vocal prayers and a half-hour of regimented meditation. Many Sisters are reading the great mystics such as Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila, now available in paper-back editions.

The encouragement of personal initiative and the striving for a contemplative ideal have, however, produced a conflict in the minds of some religious. They know that to be of service to the community they must develop a professional enthusiasm, a love for their work, a desire for success — if not for themselves, at least for their department or institution. At the same time, they find that the contemplative life requires an extreme detachment,

a detachment described by the classic mystical writers in terms that make it seem almost a form of apathy. In fact Gregory of Nyssa uses the word *apathia* to describe the detachment from the world that must precede contemplation. Henry Suso suggests that the religious must be a doormat, and he kept his doormat in choir beside him as a reminder. He notes that "The things we must all strive for are clearly set out in the Scriptures, but what each one of us must do here and now, according to his state and needs, cannot be easily determined." But he repeats the traditional advice: "A wise man should not let his interior life be encroached upon by external activity, neither should he allow exterior works to impinge upon his life of recollection, except where obedience *demands* it of him. He should seek to carry out the work he *has* to do with fervent devotion, in order to return *speedily* to his inner life...." (my italics). Saint John of the Cross warns in his cautions for religious: "Never take up anything, no matter how good it may seem to you or how full of charity, outside of what you have been obliged to do under orders... (por orden estas obligado)." I knew of one young religious who felt that Saint John of the Cross wanted him to sit in his room until the superior came to the door and issued an order. He was then to go about his work in the most disinterested way possible and rush back to his room until the superior would come by to issue another order. If this were in any way representative of the teaching of Saint John of the Cross and the classical teaching of the mystics on detachment, then the absolute detachment necessary for the contemplative life would be incompatible with the professional initiative expected of a modern religious.

It is important for religious today to understand that there is no conflict between the classical doctrine of the mystics on detachment and the professional enthusiasm expected of modern religious. There is no need to water down the teaching of the mystics or to change anything essential in their teaching to adapt it to modern conditions. What is necessary is to distinguish between the incidental advice of the mystics to the religious of their own times, and the hard core of doctrine that is good for all times. The former had its origin in special conditions that existed at a given time in the history of the religious life, and was strongly influenced by

contemporary philosophy. The latter has its roots in revelation and the theology of the contemplative experience.

Neither the incidental advice nor the essential doctrine of the mystics was meant to induce some kind of contemplative experience. Orthodox Christian mystics have never prescribed techniques by which the Christian could, by his own efforts, attain a mystical experience. Perhaps some pagan sects believe that with the proper approach — contemplating a candle flame or knife edge — the initiated can bring themselves to an experience of the absolute. Christian mystics have always understood that their personal God grants an experience of himself only when he so chooses. They have known that all they can do is to unite themselves to God so that they will be properly disposed when and if God wills to grant them the contemplative experience. Their incidental advice, directed to contemporaries, was intended to show these religious how they should act, in the concrete situations with which they were faced, to dispose themselves for the gift of contemplation.

In their essential teaching, the mystics describe the contemplative experience and tell the contemplative how to cooperate with this special action of God. The contemplative experience is univocal. Except for minor differences resulting from differences in personality, the intimate experience of God granted in contemplation has always been and will always be the same. Thus the description and advice of the mystics in this area will always be valid.

Since for centuries the religious life saw few changes either in the activity expected of individual religious or in their philosophical viewpoints, the incidental advice of the mystics was seldom questioned. Now, however, the special forms of the apostolate, the need for initiative and enthusiasm, have changed the complexion of the religious life. A re-analysis of the mystics' suggestions to their contemporaries on the proper dispositions for the contemplative life is necessary. Fortunately, at the same time an Incarnational theology and a Christian existential ethic are being developed that contrast markedly with the Platonically tinged philosophy that contributed much to the classic asceticism. Where the mystics sometimes described the world and flesh almost as evil, current theology stresses the fact that all creation has been elevated through

the Incarnation, so that most Christians and even most religious are not bound so much to flee the world as to help redeem it. Where the man with the classical Greek world-view was anxious to get his work over with to turn to leisure — study for the non-Christian, prayer for the Christian — the modern Christian knows that he must take each act of his existence as an opportunity for union with God.

This is not to suggest that Christians must abandon the Greek love for balance and detachment, for leisure and natural contemplation. The Greek ideal is an important part of our western heritage, and has shown itself over the centuries to be perfectly compatible with the Christian message. What is important is that the Greek ideal should not be identified with Christian ascesis.

It will be the task of scholars in the field of ascetical and mystical theology to determine as precisely as possible to what extent an author is reflecting a contemporary world-view and to what extent he is developing an authentic Christian ascesis; to what extent he is treating of contemporary problems, and to what extent his suggestions have universal application; to what extent he is discussing the preliminary dispositions for contemplation and to what extent the contemplative experience itself. I would like to offer only a few observations on the possibility of an absolute detachment on the part of religious who are required to exercise a large amount of personal initiative.

I believe that the highly specialized professional life required of many religious today offers greater opportunities for detachment than the simple life formerly led in religious communities. It is significant that spiritual directors often had to search for or invent means for detaching their subjects. Today these possibilities for detachment are often built into the professional life embraced by the religious. The scientific detachment encouraged by the university today is a natural aid to the supernatural detachment and humility encouraged by the mystics. Anyone who has had to excise large sections of a carefully written dissertation or re-examine a pet theory in the light of new discoveries knows the value of such an experience, if it is taken properly. (It is disconcerting, however, to see Sisters in graduate school react in the same way as their elementary school charges in the face of cor-

rection.) Thus professional training today should be an aid to detachment, in contrast, perhaps, to the days when spiritual writers warned against the dangers of learning. At the time of the *Imitation of Christ*, science was often only the systematic defense of prejudices and might naturally lead to even greater attachment to one's own ideas and ways of acting.

Today the religious is often asked to risk his reputation to push for a new science building or new dramatic facilities or a new program of studies. It certainly requires greater humility and detachment to risk one's reputation in the community by encouraging such a project if necessary, and to face the results if it should fail, than merely to sit back and let others take the initiative. That there is a danger of pride and self-will in such a course of action no one can deny, but these are possible in any form of life.

The natural detachment required to accept the rejection of a project made impossible because of lack of funds or interest is certainly greater than that required to give up dessert or to eat spinach. The joyful acceptance of a transfer out of one's favorite field of work into a less attractive apostolate is more of a sacrifice than the made-up mortifications spiritual directors had to impose on Sisters living a simpler life in cloistered convents.

Sisters who are drawing closer to God will want to spend increasingly longer periods at prayer. And these long periods of mental prayer seem important as a disposition for the contemplative experience. But the problem in finding time for prayer and in avoiding distractions from professional activities will offer still another opportunity for detachment.

These are only a few examples of detachment that can be practiced by the dedicated professional in religious life. Every Sister can add examples from her own life or that of her companions. What is important is that the religious take these for what they are: opportunities for practicing the absolute detachment required of the Christian who aspires to the highest forms of union with God. It is important also that Sisters not be afraid to become enthusiastic about their professional work, for fear of not being sufficiently detached. It would be wrong for a Sister to dream of fleeing to a simpler life when the complex professional life she is leading offers ample opportunities for the most extreme forms of Christian detachment.

Book Reviews

THE DIVINE FAMILY. By William K. McDonough. Macmillan Company, New York, 1963. Pp. x, 178. Cloth, $3.95.

Faith is one. Every revealed truth is related to other revealed truths, and in some way all stem from and lead back to the Trinity. But because this mystery is so profound (some have said that no one has improved on Saint Augustine's treatise) not much is available in contemporary writing outside of considerations of the indwelling of the Trinity.

The Divine Family by Father McDonough should be helpful in making the Trinity part of thinking and living. The chapter headings emphasize the family idea: Father; Son; Breathing Bond of Love; Inseparable Family; Family Adoptions, etc. The Trinity and the persons of the Trinity are treated first; then the closeness of their relationship to rational creatures, and the relationship of this mystery to other doctrines.

This is a "popular" presentation, according to the book jacket. Examples from everyday experience, art, and literature, bring the matter down to the popular level, but there are passages in the book that the reader will still consider "hard going." How could it be otherwise? But the author has succeeded in helping us "to know this mystery 'in depth,' proportioned to our capacity, in the here and now."

Sources are Scripture, used generously, the Fathers, and the *Summa*. Among the more modern sources are Matthias Scheeben and Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity. The quotation from Cardinal Suenens on the ordinary magisterium (p. 106) deserves notice. The last two paragraphs are among the best in the book.

Sister M. Aloysia, S.S.N.D.
Mount Mary College
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

CHRIST, MODEL AND REWARD OF RELIGIOUS. By Very Rev. James Alberione, S.S.P., S.T.D. Translated by a Daughter of St. Paul. Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, 1963. Pp. 205. Cloth, $3.00. Paper, $2.00.

This book contains conferences given by Father Alberione, eminent founder of five religious congregations approved by the Holy See and spread throughout the world. These talks exhibit a keen awareness of the problems of modern religious life. Father Alberione's emphasis on the basic essentials of the religious life adapted to religious of the twentieth century is surely an answer to those who fear that the stress on an active apostolate might obscure the primary aims and purposes of the religious. Father Alberione's conferences are strong; he stresses sanctification and emphasizes the supernatural means to attain it, without in any way neglecting the human elements. One is delighted to find things like this: "It is not enough simply to 'keep going' carelessly. We must give great importance to the intellect. I believe that man's greatest responsibility is his use of this faculty, his most noble one....The

service we give God with our mind is the main one. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole mind.' How few there are who love God with their mind!"

The mood of this book is deep, theological, stressing fundamentals in a beautiful way. The practical applications that are given are encouraging for those dedicated to a modern apostolate, clearly indicating the harmony between the essentials of a deep interior life and a dynamic apostolate in which the religious must never lose sight of her dedication.

Sister Maura, O.P.
Caldwell College
Caldwell, New Jersey

FRIENDS, ROMANS, PROTESTANTS. By Joseph T. McGloin, S.J. Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1963. Pp. x, 159. Cloth, $3.50.

Twelve very profound theological topics are here treated with Father McGloin's inimitable humor and clarity. He presents a logical exposition of such questions as the existence and attributes of God, the validity of revelation, the miracles of Christ, particularly his resurrection, and the establishment of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. In conclusion, the author neatly lists the logical sequence of facts upon which he has dwelt in the previous chapters.

When one finishes the book, one wonders why there are any atheists, non-Christians or Protestants left in the world. Everything appears here to be so simple.

In reality, we know that the things of the spirit are not so simple and very often seem to defy logic, for when we encounter the Infinite, logic somehow seems to disappear.

This reviewer found the book disappointing, for it was lacking in the new thinking of mystery, encounter, and commitment, which would have left the reader with a desire to contemplate the things of God.

Sister Eugene Marie, O.S.B.
Elizabeth, New Jersey

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHARITY. By Sister Nazarene Morando, D.S.P. Daughters of Saint Paul, Boston, 1963. Pp. 106. Cloth, $2.00.

This book devotes sixteen meditative chapters to a consideration of Saint Paul's reflections on the qualities of charity (I Cor. 13:4-7). The author states in the preface that the considerations are taken almost exclusively from a treatise of James Joseph Duguet (Venice: 1783).

Each virtuous quality — patience, kindness, etc. — that accompanies charity is analyzed according to its relationship to the queen virtue. Applications and examples from the life of Christ, from Scripture, and the saints are freely used to exemplify the manifold characteristics of charity.

Envy, jealousy, ambition are contrasted with the divine virtue. Numerous passages from Saint Paul's other letters support charity's preeminence.

This simple presentation bears out one of the marks of charity. "Charity is not pretentious," said Saint Paul. In explaining the absence of this quality the author states: "When this appealing virtue (charity) succeeds in taking over a heart, little

by little it transforms it entirely. It sweetens all that which was bitter; it destroys presumption and pride which dispose one to judge everyone and everything; it leads one to question his own wisdom, oftentimes more apparent than real; it purifies thoughts and sentiments; and it even softens the tone of the voice" (p. 38).

Sister M. Eugene Reynolds, O.S.U.
Ursuline Convent
Paola, Kansas

BELIEF AND FAITH: A Philosophical Tract. By Josef Pieper. Translated by Richard and Clara Winston. Pantheon Books, New York, 1963. Pp. 107. Cloth, $3.95.

In this exposition of the nature of belief and faith, Dr. Pieper first seeks to establish the exact meaning of the word *belief*. To do this, he explores Saint Thomas Aquinas' teachings and examines the work of contemporaries. He cites authorities from Augustine to Newman, Hesiod to Kierkegaard, to determine the precise point of their unanimity. And he points out that, in the last analysis, to believe is to accept something as true because we trust somebody. Or, as Newman put it, "We believe because we love."

Having established the nature of human belief, the author next considers religious faith, or belief in God. He shows that while here, too, belief means "to accept something unconditionally as real and true on the testimony of someone else who understands the matter out of his own knowledge," nevertheless religious belief, or faith, is not simply a further step along the way. It is a leap.

The author then considers what this "leap" comprises. He concludes by pointing out that man's attitude toward God can never be that of an equal deciding for himself whether he will believe or no. It must rather always be that of a willing subject, approaching the truth "with homage."

Well annotated, indexed, and carrying a brief biography of the author, the book is an excellent translation of a distinguished philosopher's writing.

Sister Mary Catherine, O.S.U.
Ursuline Academy
Cumberland, Maryland

GOD'S KINGDOM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. By Martin Hopkins, O.P. St. Mary's College Press, Winona, Minnesota, 1963. Pp. xx, 200. Paper, 8 1/2 x 10 3/4 inches, $3.00.

Fortunately, some texts for college Bible courses are becoming available; this book is designed for a one-semester, two-hour survey course covering general introduction, the OT books, and background material, divided into 30 chapters, roughly one for each class period. It contains assigned readings for each lesson in the OT and companion works, some 45 maps and charts, a bibliography, and indices. The book represents a praiseworthy effort elaborated in actual teaching experience, and contains much information. Its basic defect is not in content, though there are numerous errors of detail, but in the mentality with which the Bible is approached. Despite an obvious effort to assimilate modern biblical criticism, the author remains too often in the mentality of sys-

tematic theology, with the result that texts are made to say more than they actually contain, and to answer to preoccupations quite foreign to the biblical writers. The author's concern to systematize (especially in the charts) is doubtless good pedagogy, but it should be done in biblical categories, not scholastic ones: e.g., treating the precepts of the decalogue as conclusions from natural law. This procedure leads to a theological concordism quite as false as the scientific concordism against which the author rightly protests. A companion volume on the NT is scheduled to appear this year.

Claude Peifer, O.S.B.
Saint Bede Abbey
Peru, Illinois

THE LITURGY AND THE LAITY. By James W. King, S.J. Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1963. Pp. xiii, 175. Cloth, $3.50.

In this surprisingly compact book Father King manages to give an amazingly complete picture not only of the liturgy itself but of its theology, history, and relation to home, school, art, and music. He has a wonderful talent for delineating, clearly and concisely, theological matters that often remain shrouded in obscurity: for example, just how and to what extent the laity offer Mass. Perhaps spoiled by the general clarity of his style, this reader was disappointed on two occasions by a lack of sufficient follow-through. Christ is holiness itself and possesses the fulness of grace; yet his body grows in holiness and grace. This paradox often puzzles the layman and it seems a shame that Father did not use his talent to tell us just how this is so. Similarly, "mortal sin cuts the sinner off from the life of the mystical body, either entirely or partially" (p. 91). Although this dilemma is discussed, the author seems to assume that everyone knows how and which mortal sins cut one off either partially or entirely.

Undeniably his greatest contribution is his superb treatment of the sacraments. In addition to an excellent study of their outward signs, their social and liturgical aspects are fully developed to bring out the act of worship involved and the resulting encounter with Christ. For this reason, the book could serve as a fine aid to teachers seeking a more vital liturgy-centered presentation of the sacraments. They might also find helpful suggestions in areas yet to be fully exploited by our schools (music and art), which would assist them in forming and preparing liturgical awareness. A further point to recommend is a detailed index and the many footnotes which indicate good bibliographical material.

Any book written prior to the promulgation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy is, in a sense, dated, because suggestions are often realities now; but because of its solid historical and theological basis, this book can only serve to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the Constitution.

Sonya A. Quitslund
Catholic University
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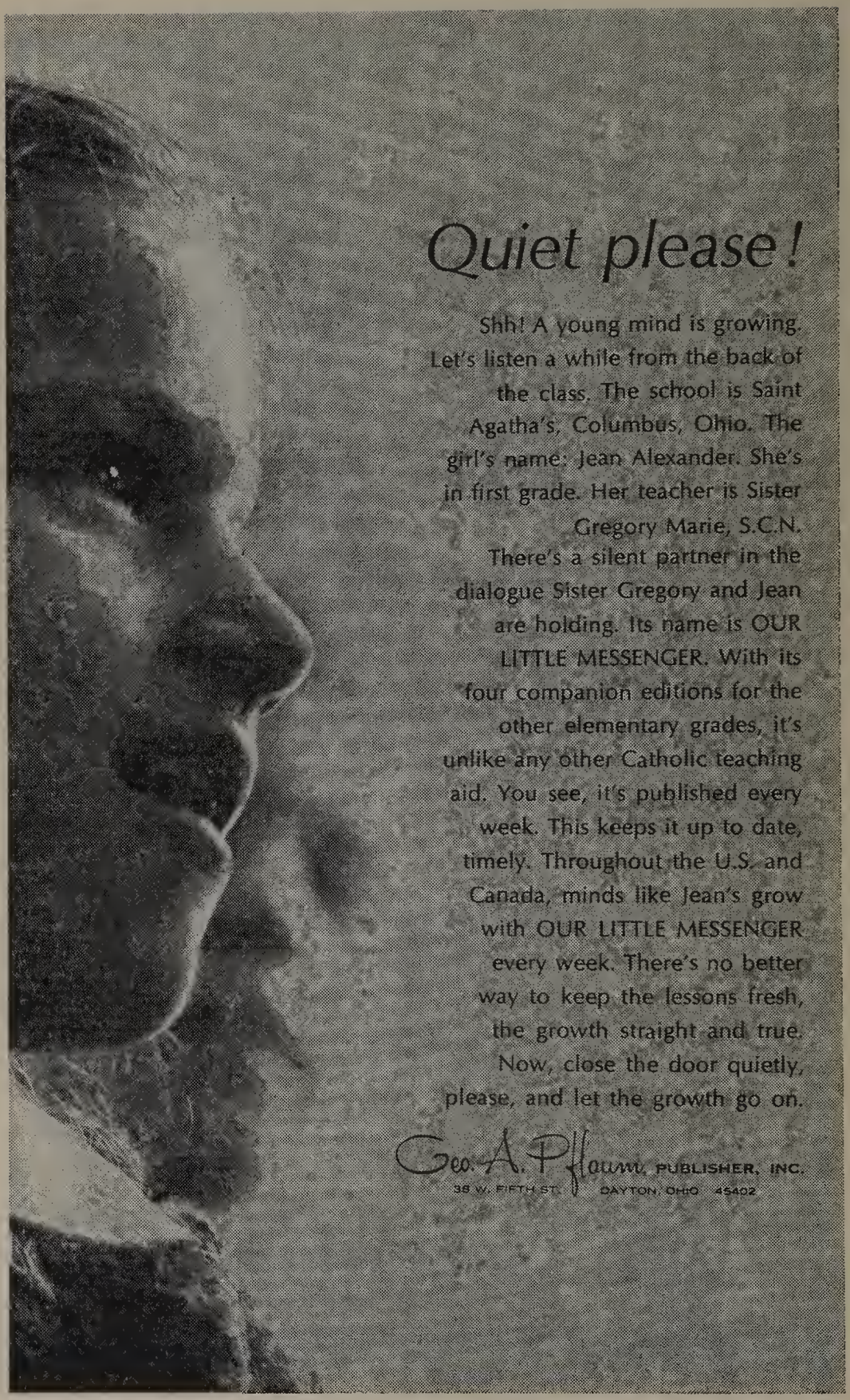

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